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ABSTRACT

The development of a work practice center for visually impaired multihandicapped adolescents in a residential school for the blind is described. The purpose of the center is explained to be preparation of work habits and skills for adult placement in sheltered employment settings. Six stages in program development are traced: intake information, vocational service questionnaire, prevocational skills assessment, synthesis of information, inservice training, and ongoing data collection. (CL)

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DEVELOPMENT OF A WORK PRACTICE CENTER FOR VISUALLY IMPAIRED MULTIHANDICAPPED ADOLESCENTS

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The Michigan School for the Blind has implemented a prevocational program for visually impaired severely multiply handicapped adolescents. The Work Practice Center program serves approximately 45 blind mulithandicapped students, ranging in age from 11 to 26. In addition to visual impairment, the students have multiple disabilities such as a hearing impairment, emotional impairment, orthopedic impairments, and mental retardation. The combination of impairments and the resulting generalized level of depressed functioning limits the vocational opportunities available to the student. The least restrictive vocational setting for the majority of students is that of sheltered employment such as sheltered workshops or work activity centers.

As a means of preparing these severely multiply handicapped students to succeed in a vocational placement, the Work Practice Center focuses on the development of prerequisite work habits and skills for adult placement in sheltered employment settings. The program design is based on individualized scheduling of students on their needs and on the overall program objectives. The acquisition of work habits and work skills is being developed through the use of a realistic work routine, simulated work samples, and the use of a concept based curriculum.

Vocational Service Questionnaire

In order to design and maintain the relevance of the Work Practice Center curriculum and procedures, data was needed regarding current expectations and practices within the rehabilitation facilities. Since the students in the target population are candidates for placement in sheltered employment, a vocational service questionnaire was designed to survey existing vocational facilities in Michigan currently serving the handicapped. The survey collected data on the types of handicapped individuals being served, entrance criteria, work samples, and suggested work rates. The vocational service questionnaire was divided into three major parts. The first part dealt with the actual curriculum content. It asked questions such as "Which of the following skills or concepts must clients have to successfully complete the most common long-term jobs or contracts?" Curriculum concepts listed were bilateral hand coordination, discrimination skills, packaging skills, assembly skills, and the use of tools. Another item dealt with the number of steps in the most and the least complex assembly task, and with the number of choices in a sorting activity. Other items asked questions about the types of containers used, the prevalence of the assembly line technique for assembly of tasks,

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and the type of hand tools and power tools used by clients. The next content area on the vocational service questionnaire concerned the areas of independence required of clients. The questions asked what were the areas in which the facility provided staff assistance for clients. Suggested areas were communication, toileting, feeding, dressing, following lunch routine, work routine, mobility, handling transportation, etc. This section of the survey also asked the question of what were acceptable alternate modes of communications. The final section of the vocational service questionnaire dealt with the amount of time set aside to train clients, the types of reinforcement schedules which were acceptable, and the attention span required of the client. The information collected on the vocational service questionnaire was the basis for the goals, objectives, and curriculum for the Work Practice Center. A selected sample of results of the questionnaire items is illustrated below.

Table 1. Types and Percentages of Skills Used in Work Activity Centers and Sheltered Workshops

WAC*	S.W.**	
85	92	a. bilateral hand coordination
73	84	b. size discrimination
85	78	c. shape discrimination
40	43	d. color discrimination
54	54	e. one to one correspondence
40	46	f. filling containers
73	81	g. use of jigs
85	89	h. packaging
79	81	i. hand assembly (no tools)
46	84	j. assembly using hand tools
23	84	k. assembly using power tools
38	43	l. assembly using match to sample
46	46	m. collating
33	49	n. woodworking (hand tools)
29	49	o. woodworking (power tools)

*Work Activity Center
**Sheltered Workshop

Table 2. Number of Steps in Most and Least Complex Assembly Tasks

	WAC		S.W.	
Most Complex	6 - 7	(number of steps)	8 - 10	(number of steps)
Least Complex	1	(number of steps)	2	(number of steps)

Table 3. Percentage of Facilities Providing Staff Assistance in Specified Areas

WAC	S.W.	AREAS OF STAFF ASSISTANCE
65	49	a. communication (sign language)
54	8	b. toileting (e.g., verbal reminder, manipulating clothing, locating)
40	3	c. feeding (e.g., serve self, cut/spread food, open containers)
40	5	d. dressing (e.g., putting on/off coat, boots, apron, ect.)
81	38	e. following lunch routine
96	81	f. following work routine/schedule
69	54	g. mobility on the job
81	43	h. helping client get on/off transportation
19	11	i. traveling with client to and from work

Intake Information

Extensive intake information is gathered on each student in an effort to tailor the program to the population being served. The intake information includes medical, developmental, educational, behavioral, and prevocational information. Medical information includes an estimate of corrected vision, degree of hearing loss, and a brief description of any physical or orthopedic disability. Educational information reports include developmental functioning levels in major curriculum areas, and specific language information including receptive and expressive vocabulary, as well as the mode of communication. The types of questions describing behavioral programs survey the degree of freedom from disruptive behavior, self-stimulatory and aggressive behaviors demonstrated by the student, and behavioral management techniques used to control those behaviors. The prevocational information section includes skills necessary to function in a vocational environment. Skills surveyed are mobility skills, the ability to follow a routine, the number of sequential directions a student can follow, the attention span or length of time the student can work independently, and the type of reinforcement schedule and/or reinforcers used with the student. The last section of the information intake form asks questions about the types of prevocational activities or tasks the student has worked on in the past. The information about the types of skills and materials the student has worked on was utilized in ordering materials. The material collected in the intake information form was then synthesized to clarify the type of students being served in the Work Practice Center and to order the appropriate materials to serve those students.

Prevocational Skills Assessment

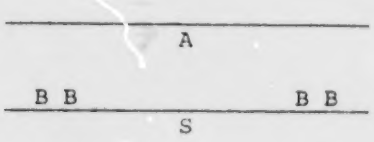
The prevocational skills assessment is comprised of five major sections: rudimentary fine motor skills, visual/tactile discrimination, basic packaging skills, basic assembly skills, and basic tool use. Each student is individually assessed using this instrument. The information gathered during the

assessment is then used to place the student within the Work Practice Center curriculum. The level of difficulty of the activity chosen, as well as the size and type of materials utilized, is all directly dependent upon the result of the prevocational assessment. Two examples of items from the Prevocationa Skills Assessment are illustrated below.

Example #1

II. Visual/Tactile Discrimination

Arrange the materials of each item in the following manner:



A - container holding materials
B - empty containers into which sorted materials will be placed
S - student

Begin the sorting tasks by placing one object (a different type) in each container B.

Demonstrate the task by placing 1 of each type object into the correct container (B).

Score each item correct when the student sorts 5 of 10 or 10 of 12 objects correctly.
Note: If the student cannot physically manipulate the materials, the instructor will assist by visually or tactually showing the students the objects and then placing the objects in the correct container (B). Record this type of assistance in the comment section.

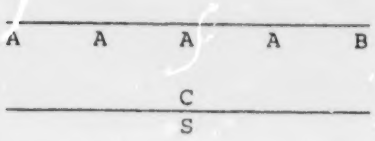
Shape
Sort the following objects:
a) 1" wooden beads: round, square, cylinder
b) 1/2" beads: round, square, cylinder
c) 1/4" x 2" x 2" shapes: square, triangle, diamond
d) 3/8" x 2" bolts with hexagon, round heads
e) #12 x 3/8" hooks: eye, cup, L shape heads
f) #8 x 3/4" screws: pan, oval, flat, round heads

Example #2

IV. Basic Assembly Skills

Sequential Assembly

Arrange the materials in the prescribed left to right sequence detailed in each item. Follow this format:



A - assembly components
B - finished product box
C - work space
S - student

Put the specified combinations of components together in the prescribed left to right sequential order to produce the finished product.

Demonstrate each assembly sequence 3 times.

Record as correct when the student successfully completes the assembly sequence in 3 of 3 trials or 4 of 5 trials.

a) soap dish assembly - soap dish base, dish grid
b) plastic tape dispenser - one half of dispenser with metal clip, roll of transparent tape, second half of tape dispenser
c) measuring spoons assembly - 1 tbsp., 1 tsp., 1/2 tsp., 1/4 tsp., metal key ring
d) drawer handle assembly - drawer handle, bolt, wood block, nut, bolt, nut

Synthesis of Information

The next stage is the analysis of the intake and assessment information. By looking at the material listed in the intake information form and the assessment information, an educational plan is developed for each student. The educational plan looks at both work behaviors and skill levels in terms of task performance. After this is completed, the coordinator of the Work Practice Center meets with each student's teacher in cooperative planning for the student's participation in the Work Practice Center program. Topics discussed are: what is the best goal for that student, what teaching methods have worked best for that student in the past, and what behavioral strategies should be utilized within the Work Practice Center program.

In-service Training

The final stage of implementation is to provide in-service training to the Work Practice Center staff and regular teaching staff on the operation of the Work Practice Center. This is done by meeting individually with the participating teachers, explaining the purpose of the Center, outlining the work routine in terms of what the student does from the minute he/she walks into the Center, and describing the various procedures used in the Center. The participating teachers are also given in-service training within the Center itself. The Work Practice Center coordinator demonstrates teaching techniques, accountability techniques, and other management strategies to the teachers, while the students are actually working in the Center.

Ongoing Data Collection

An additional critical component will be that of data collection. Detailed longitudinal records will be kept on each student. The records will include the intake information, assessment data, entry behaviors, present levels of work preformance, and descriptions of the prevocational tasks which the student has mastered.

Summary

The development of the Work Practice Center for visually impaired adolescents at the Michigan School for the Blind encompassed six distinct stages:

1. Intake information
2. Vocational service questionnaire
3. Prevocational skills assessment
4. Synthesis of information
5. In-service training
6. Ongoing data collection

The Work Practice Center has been designed to provide an intermediate step between the early educational program and placement in vocational training programs. Through the development of appropriate work habits, work skills, and the mastering of concept based activities, the students can best be prepared for successful adult vocational placement.